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STUDIES

A SPECIAL REPORT SERIES BY THE N.C. DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH, AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
DIVISION OF STATISTICS AND INFORMATION SERVICES, CENTER FOR HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL STATISTICS,
P.O. BOX 27687, RALEIGH, N.C. 27611-7687.

No. 55

March 1991

AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF PRENATAL WIC PARTICIPATION ON BIRTH OUTCOMES AND MEDICAID COSTS IN NORTH CAROLINA

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of WIC participation on birth outcomes and Medicaid costs in North Carolina. Medicaid recipients who participated in prenatal WIC services were compared to women on Medicaid who did not receive prenatal WIC services. In order to carry out this evaluation, WIC and other health program data files were linked to 1988 birth certificates. Women on Medicaid receiving prenatal WIC services were found to have substantially lower rates of low birthweight and somewhat lower rates of infant mortality. It was estimated that for each \$1.00 spent on WIC services, savings by Medicaid in newborn medical costs (up to 60 days of age) were \$1.92 for whites and \$3.75 for blacks. Overall, the savings for each dollar spent on WIC were \$2.91.

Among the women who did receive WIC services, those participating longer and more intensely in the program had better birth outcomes. These results strongly suggest that prenatal WIC participation can be effective in reducing low birthweight, infant mortality, and newborn medical care costs among babies born to women in poverty.

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